

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 H-03 PA-03 PRS-01 USIA-15

CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 INR-10 LAB-06 NSAE-00 RSC-01

SIL-01 L-03 RSR-01 /099 W

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R 081156Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3178

INFO AMCONSUL CAPETOWN

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 09106

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, UK, SF

SUBJECT: BRITISH TRADE UNION ACTIVITIES WITH REGARD TO
SOUTH AFRICAN LABOR

1. SUMMARY: A TUC OFFICIAL GAVE CODEL EDWARDS A RUN DOWN OF HIS ORGANIZATION'S THINKING ON ITS PLANS TO SEND A DELEGATION TO SOUTH AFRICA IN OCTOBER TO INVESTIGATE LABOR CONDITIONS. THE TUC SEEMS TO BE REALISTIC IN ITS ASSESSMENT OF HOW MUCH CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED IN THE PRESENT CLIMATE TO IMPROVE THE LOT OF BLACK WORKERS. THE INVESTIGATION WILL BE CONDUCTED IN A CIRCUMSPECT MANNER SO AS NOT TO AROUSE HOSTILITY OF SAG AND WILL CONCENTRATE ON FINDING WAYS WITHIN EXISTING GROUND RULES TO IMPROVE BARGAINING POWER OF BLACKS IN THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR OF THE ECONOMY. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING CALL BY CODEL EDWARDS, ALAN HARGRAVES, HEAD OF THE OVERSEAS DIVISION OF THE TUC, SAID THAT THE TUC DELEGATION WHICH WILL VISIT SOUTH AFRICA IN OCTOBER WILL BE PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH FINDING WAYS TO IMPROVE THE BARGAINING POWER OF BLACK WORKERS. HE SAID THAT THE
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TUC WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE SITUATION OF ALL AFRICAN

WORKERS IN SOUTH AFRICA BUT RECOGNIZED THAT THE DELEGATION WOULD HAVE TO BE VERY CIRCUMSPECT IN ORDER TO AVOID CHARGES OF INTERFERENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS. THEREFORE, HE SAID, THE DELEGATION WOULD LIMIT ITS INVESTIGATIONS TO BRITISH OWNED FIRMS OR INTERNATIONAL FIRMS IN WHICH THERE WAS SUBSTANTIAL BRITISH PARTICIPATION. HARGRAVES SAID THAT HE HIMSELF WOULD PROBABLY BE A MEMBER OF THE DELEGATION, ALTHOUGH HE SAID HE DIDN'T PARTICULARLY RELISH THE PROSPECT.

3. IN DISCUSSING HOW BLACK WORKERS MIGHT IMPROVE THEIR BARGAINING POWER, HARGRAVES SAID THAT THE TUC HAD NOT YET COME UP WITH ANY PARTICULARLY BRIGHT IDEAS. HE SAID THEY MIGHT HAVE A CLEARER PICTURE AFTER THE OCTOBER VISIT. ONE APPROACH WILL BE TO TRY TO ENLIST THE COOPERATION OF THE TUCSA. HARGRAVES THOUGHT TUCSA WOULD BE SYMPATHETIC TO A POINT BUT HE RECOGNIZED THAT THIS ORGANIZATION, ALTHOUGH ITS MEMBERSHIP IS MIXED, IS MAINLY CONCERNED WITH WORKING CONDITIONS OF THE COLOREDS .

4. ONE POINT WHICH CAME THROUGH CLEARLY IN HARGRAVES' EXPOSITION WAS THAT THE TUC RECOGNIZES THE LIMITATIONS UNDER WHICH IT IS OPERATING. IN THIS REGARD, HE MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

(A) IT WOULD BE IMPRACTICAL TO TAKE ANY PUNITIVE ACTIONS IN BRITAIN AGAINST UK FIRMS OPERATING IN SOUTH AFRICA WHO FAILED TO MEET MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR THEIR BLACK EMPLOYEES. THERE IS NO SIGNIFICANT PRESSURE IN BRITAIN FOR WITHDRAWAL OF BRITISH INDUSTRY FROM SOUTH AFRICA. WITH LESS THAN 500,000 UNEMPLOYED IN THE UK, BRITISH WORKERS ARE NOT CONCERNED ABOUT THE

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COMPETITION OF CHEAP SOUTH AFRICAN LABOR.

(B) THE TUC DOES NOT WISH TO SEE THE WITHDRAWAL OF
BRITISH FIRMS FROM SOUTH AFRICA AS THE TUC HAS
HAD A FAIRLY PRODUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE
MANAGEMENT OF THESE FIRMS AND THEY BELIEVE THEY
CAN USE THEIR INFLUENCE ON BEHALF OF THE BLACK
SOUTH AFRICANS MORE EFFECTIVELY BY WORKING WITH
WELL ESTABLISHED BRITISH COMPANIES.

(C) THERE IS NO POINT IN ATTEMPTING TO IMPROVE
CONDITIONS IN THE AGRICULTURAL AND MINING
SECTORS WHERE A BRITISH ORGANIZATION WOULD HAVE
NO LEVERAGE AND WHERE THERE IS LITTLE OR NO
COMPETITION FOR SKILLED LABOR; THE TUC WILL
THEREFORE CONCENTRATE ON THE MANUFACTURING
SECTOR.

(D) THE TUC RECOGNIZES THAT ANY IMPROVEMENTS IN THE
SITUATION OF BLACK WORKERS WILL HAVE TO BE MADE
WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE POLITICAL REALITIES
OF SOUTH AFRICA TODAY. THERE IS LITTLE LIKELI-
HOOD THAT SWEEPING REFORMS COULD BE MADE THROUGH
LEGISLATIVE ACTION AND CHANGES WILL HAVE TO BE
MADE WITH AN EYE TO THE RULES AND PRACTICES
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